

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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DOCKET 09-AFC-9
DATE NOV 18 2009
RECD JAN 15 2010

November 18, 2009

Eric K. Solorio, Project Manager
 California Energy Commission
 1516 9th Street
 Sacramento, California 95814-5512

File: 09-KER
 RFC
 SCH #: none

Dear Mr. Solorio:

Ridgecrest Solar Millennium Power Project (09-AFC-9) - Request for Agency Participation

Thank you for giving the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 9 the opportunity to review the Application for Certification (AFC) for the solar power facility in Kern County, south of Ridgecrest and adjacent to US 395. I appreciate the interaction with California Energy Commission and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) staff at the November 4, 2009 Ridgecrest meeting. At that meeting, Mr. Fiore provided a draft "Traffic and Transportation Data Request Sheet" to which I emailed comments to both you and him. Please consider those comments and the following pertaining to the AFC:

- Figure 1-2 (and others) depict project Right-of-Way (ROW) and plant site location. Although the map scale is such that US 395 ROW might not be discernable, the Legend could include a note clarifying that the US 395 ROW is not part of the Solar Project. (Caltrans currently holds an easement over BLM lands of an approximate 250-ft width.)
- We previously provided information on a highway project that would widen US 395 to 4-lanes and alter the Brown Road/South China Lake Blvd. intersection. Although this is in the distant future, it should be reflected in the document. We suggest the following wording for inclusion in project description sections: "A US 395 widening project has already been proposed adjacent to the solar facility site. Hence, the layout of the solar facility will reflect appropriate offsets to accommodate any future highway ROW."
- Sections 2.3 *Location of Facilities* and 5.13 *Traffic and Transportation* state that project access will be from Brown Road. As discussed at the meeting and noted in the previously provided comments, an alternative US 395 access must be analyzed.
- Section 5.13.2.4 *Safety* does not adequately address safety for the project or the traveling public. The proposed highway access is at the Brown/South China Lake Blvd./US 395 intersection, which has an overall collision rate approximately three times higher than the statewide average for similar highway facilities. With the speed differentials and turning movements (during both construction and operational phases) either this access or an alternative US 395 access must provide safe US 395 access including sufficient acceleration/deceleration lanes and sight distance. A traffic signal (as noted in the AFC) at any US 395 access in this corridor is not something we could allow.

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- In Table 5.13-2 for Caltrans District 9, replace "Stephen Winzenread" with "Mark Reistetter". His phone number is (760) 872-0674 and email address is mark.reistetter@dot.ca.gov.
- Revisions to section 5.13.3.2 *Construction Phase Impacts* are needed to reflect the US 395 access issues raised above. Third paragraph, last sentence replace "Boron Road" with "Brown Road."
- Section 5.13.4 *Mitigation Measures*, likely traffic mitigation measures would include:

TR-#? – Prior to the start of solar plant construction, the project owner shall coordinate with Caltrans, provide improvement plans for a US 395 access, obtain an encroachment permit, and construct the improvements.

TR-#? - The project owner (or Community Service District) shall obtain an encroachment permit from Caltrans District 9 for the water pipeline crossing of US 395. It shall be installed by bore and jack methodology.

We value a cooperative working relationship with the California Energy Commission regarding transportation issues of power generating facilities. If you have any questions, I may be contacted at (760) 872-0785.

Sincerely,



GAYLE J. ROSANDER
IGR/CEQA Coordinator

c: Robert Fiore, CA Energy Commission
Paul Rodriguez, BLM Ridgecrest
Steve Wisniewski, Caltrans